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ABSTRACT

The educational outlook for children of school age in low-income minority neighborhoods of New York City is discussed, drawing primarily on the researcher's observations in a field study in Central Harlem. The decline the neighborhoods have undergone is summarized; and the role of drugs, especially crack, is discussed. Some opinions of residents are reviewed, and the effects of a deteriorating physical and socioeconomic environment on school-age children and their families are considered. The experiences of three residents, an adult male, a young adult male, and a young mother, are recounted. These respondents were chosen because of the emphasis they placed on schools or education in interviews with the researcher. Recurrent in their remarks are a high level of frustration, the frequency of parental abandonment, perpetuation of social patterns, lack of discipline, peer pressure, and estrangement from community and school. Some policy recommendations are made to improve the situation through a fuller use of the school and its resources. In a "Marshall Plan" for cities, schools could play the roles of islands of stability and act as tutorial villages with services for children and families. Contains 50 references. (SLD)

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The View from New York City's Crack-Plagued Neighborhoods

Ansley Hamid

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THE VIEW FROM NEW YORK CITY'S CRACK-PLAGUED NEIGHBORHOODS

Ansley Hamid

"It takes a whole village to educate one child"

[East African proverb]

Introduction

This chapter discusses the educational outlook for children of school age in low-income, minority neighborhoods in New York City. The discussion draws primarily on my observations in Central Harlem in the borough of Manhattan, which contains neighborhoods where I have maintained a field presence for eight years, while conducting several ethnographic research projects in the area of drug use, distribution, misuse, and related issues.

I have subdivided the chapter into several sections. First, I summarize the steep decline the neighborhoods have undergone in the past three decades, and show how drug use and distribution (especially crack in the 1980s) are articulated in their downward spiral. Next, I transcribe the voices of some residents who comment on schools, education and life in the neighborhood. Guided by their discourse, I explore how a deteriorating physical and socioeconomic environment affects school-age children and their homes, schools, the relationship between their families and the school, teachers, the educational process and such educational outcomes as dropping out of school and failure. Even if they graduate from high school, many young adults do not become productive citizens because they succumb to substance misuse and criminal lifestyles. I conclude by proposing some policy approaches to address these issues.

The testaments of three Central Harlemites--Wes, Seamus, and Kathy--are

central to this report. Wes is the 35-year-old father of a 10-year-old girl who attends a local public school. Seamus is an 18-year-old male intermittent crack distributor/armed robber who intends to graduate from high school in 1991. And Kathy is a 26-year-old high school graduate, the mother of two children of school age, who currently exchanges sex services for crack. The three are representative of their ages and genders: like Wes, many middle-aged male minority workers have come off badly from the conjunction of mid-life crises with drugs or other criminality (Hamid, 1991a); Seamus is indistinguishable from the thousands of young men whom visitors see milling about at street corners in low-income, minority neighborhoods; while Kathy is one of the extraordinary number of young minority females who misuse crack (Inciardi, 1987; Frank et al., 1987; Greanleaf, 1989; Bourgois, 1989; Clatts, 1990; Hamid, 1991b).

Wes, Seamus, and Kathy were self-selected for this chapter from a larger pool of study informants with whom I have worked for several years because of the emphasis they had placed on schools or education in interviews I was taperecording: Wes often expressed the hope that his daughter would achieve a better life through success at school; Seamus was putting all his energies into regular attendance at school in order to avoid incarceration; and Kathy was sometimes lifted out of her depression by remembering the halcyon days she had enjoyed in parochial school.

Central Harlem

The study site, Central Harlem, has been predominantly African-American since the 1920s, and it became internationally recognized as the "capital" of the Pan-African world where the largest number of people of African descent outside of Africa had established a diverse, industrious and long-abiding community. Today, the section still boasts small pockets of housing, or landmark buildings, which are

relics of the high style in which some Harlemites had lived, or reminders of the solid, working class base upon which the community had rested.

A substantial part of Central Harlem, however, has been reduced over the past several decades to blocks of abandoned housing or commercial property, empty lots, a few intact private or public housing estates, and decaying brownstones or apartment buildings. In the latter, native Harlemites crowd together with fresh arrivals from the South, or with Caribbean Africans from the Caribbean islands. Hispanic migrants in East and West Harlem enclose the section. A small commercial establishment, operating along the major avenues and dominated by merchants who are not usually local residents, serve the community. They compete with an increasing army of sidewalk vendors, who are Harlemites of African descent or recent immigrants from West Africa.

The gross parameters of the decline of inner-city neighborhoods in New York City, and in major cities across the United States, have been well documented (Myrdal, 1962; Wilson, 1987; Hughes, 1988; Ricketts and Sawhill, 1988; Jencks and Petersen, 1991; Moss and Tilly, 1991; Kasarda, 1991). Since the 1960s, New York City has lost over 520,000 manufacturing jobs (minimally offset by an increase during the 1980s of 286,000 low-paid service sector jobs), and the unemployment rate has climbed to 48 percent. During this time, the city lost over 50 percent of its low-income housing units (Hopper, 1985; Dolbeare, 1983; Hartman et al., 1982; Tucker, 1989). A consequence of male unemployment has been a decline in marriages and a rise in the number of female-headed households; while the loss of affordable housing has obliged these households to suffer makeshift shelter or highly mobile lifestyles, or to "double up" and "treble up" in housing units meant for single families only (Hamid, 1990). As many female heads of households do not work, and are supported by public transfers such as Aid To Dependent Families (AFDC), their

children may grow up in poverty and suffer other social disadvantages (Garfinkel and McLanahan, 1986; Dornbusch et al., 1985; Dembo, 1988).

By the 1980s, these effects concentrated in areas like Central Harlem. Extreme poverty tracts increased citywide since the 1970s from 84 to 311, and the population within them rose from 300,000 to nearly 1 million, or from 3.8 percent of the city's population to 14.1 percent, while the "underclass" grew from 94,000 to 421,000 (Kasarda, 1991), or from 1.2 percent of the city's population to 6 percent. Central Harlem had been one of the principal recipients of intra- and inter-neighborhood migrants during the decade. When housing in nearby sections (for example, the South Bronx) had been destroyed through abandonment, or through arson and accidental fires, residents fled to Central Harlem, "doubling up" and "trebling up" in available housing.

In 1990, at least three generations of a family may have been co-residents in the same household, which non-related sharers or "paying guests" had overcrowded further, but their paths had diverged greatly. A woman in her late 40s or early 50s may be a grandmother. Having recovered from alcohol misuse in the 1960s, she has now rediscovered church and is devoted to it. Meanwhile her children from 23 to 35 years old have been devastated by crack; and they live in a circle distinct from and even predatory upon the mother's. Their children, from 12 to 20 years old, resist crack and heroin use. However, they have dropped out of school, are unemployed and without the means for independent housing, and are parenting their own infants. Some sell drugs, and the few who are briefly successful at it may contribute to the household. Children under the age of 12 may be the offspring of any of the preceding generations. Neglected, they form cliques which roam at will from in front of the television to the streets.

Public amenities have been lost over the same period of time. The city's

bankruptcy in the 1970s afforded fewer firefighters, libraries, parks and recreational activities, Headstart programs, hospitals, and provisions for day care. As tenancy in neighborhoods grew more transitional or tenuous, the number and effectiveness of voluntary associations, such as tenants associations, block associations, and parents-teachers associations declined. Churches and schools lost pools of long-term, local supporters. Although many newcomers were recent migrants to the city, the city established no new culturally sensitive institutions to acclimatize them to American life. Neighborhoods became increasingly reliant on a 911-mobilized police force (instead of upon the familiar officer patrolling the neighborhood "beat") to intervene in domestic and neighborhood crises. The fate of New York City's schools in the severe budget cuts of the 1970s is relevant to the educational outcomes. Class sizes increased, libraries and enrichment programs were removed, early retirement of tenured teachers was sought, the physical plants of schools were allowed to deteriorate, while the schools themselves had become the battleground of acrimonious disputes over control among the Board of Education, the United Federation of Teachers, and community activists (Cremin, 1961; Berube and Gittell, 1969; Ravitch, 1968; Katz, 1971). The resulting alienation of all parties is part of the context in which the high school dropout rate (and the formation of an extensive youth "counterculture" in the school) arose. In 1991, Governor Cuomo recommended severe budget cuts which will adversely affect the New York City school system. Dropout rates cannot be reasonably expected to improve.

Today, Central Harlem outranks the remainder of New York City in the proportion of residents who live in these categories: poverty, dropout rates among school-age children, criminal offenses (in every age group and offense category), drug arrests, reported incidents of child abuse and neglect, poor health, and substance misuse. New York City Police Department (NYPD) precinct statistics

show that in the patrol borough of Manhattan North in 1990, the study site ranked first in robbery, rape, burglary, and grand larceny complaints; in assault complaints; and in homicide and grand larceny auto complaints. It also ranked first in the number of narcotics complaints and arrests (NYPD, 1990).

As these statistics worsened, public sentiment that parts of New York City were "off-limits" grew. Events like the trashing of nearby streets after a Diana Ross concert in Central Park (Manhattan), or Bernard Goetz's assault on minority teenagers, or the rape of an investment banker in Central Park polarized New Yorkers. A popular novel, Bonfire of the Vanities (Wolfe, 1989), portrayed a city in which residents were marooned in the South Bronx (a section contiguous with Central Harlem), while visitors, who inadvertently wandered there, traveled directly to the "Heart of Darkness." Recent ethnographies describe how the segregation of the city discourages some minority youths from taking advantage of job opportunities or cultural enrichment "downtown," where they feel ill-at-ease and unwelcome (Bourgois, 1989; Anderson, 1990).

Role Of Crack

Since 1985, crack has played an instrumental role in accelerating processes of socio-economic and environmental decline; and reciprocally, these processes accelerated the popular use of crack among low-income, minority populations. For example, its variegated impact can be seen in the following domains:

Employment. The changing economy and loss of jobs for the unskilled contribute to maintaining high rates of unemployment among minority (and especially African-American) males. The problem increases when crack users and distributors become less employable over time, arrest and prison records pile up, and the individual loses opportunities for training or grows less familiar with the routines and

skills of work. Continued drug use also increases the risk of AIDS or other health related problems (Goldstein et al., 1987; Gibbs, 1988; DesJarlais et al., 1989). Since 1980, when smoking cocaine in the form of freebase was introduced, and in the form of crack since 1984, successive age cohorts and occupational classes have succumbed to erosions of social status in their neighborhoods and of employability. Only individuals in their late 20s or 30s with secure jobs or self-employment, large salaries, and plenty of disposable income could afford freebase; and the first local strengths to be undermined by the expense were expenditures on worthwhile projects, as well as participation at church, in parent-teacher associations or similar informal or political groupings. Later, as cocaine prices fell, many women in the same age category (late 20s and 30s) jeopardized or lost their public transfer entitlements when crack and crack misuse brought them under the surveillance of an array of state agencies. They moved directly into low-level employment, prostitution or crime. Although in its heyday (1987-90) crack distribution as an alternative means of employment seduced a significant number of minority youth, only a few prospered, while the majority headed towards addiction, impoverishment, disease, imprisonment, and death (New York Times, 1989a; Hamid, 1990).

Unlike marijuana revenues which, in the period preceding crack, people reinvested in communities to revive cottage industry (sponsoring an array of healthfood stores, leather and craft stores, agricultural projects, reggae music, day care, newspapers), crack revenues leave no improvements at the local level. Crack revenues depart to Southern Florida banks and similar institutions in the United States and to the cocaine cartels in South America. The revenues are filtered back eventually into the corporate economy (NACLA, 1989). Thus, crack has helped to create a new type of labor force, which generates income ceaselessly in high-risk, low-return criminal and legal employment to maintain the workings of the overall,

local economy (Hamid, 1991). Crack misusers form the bulk of the newly emergent work force of "scrappers," scavengers, bottle and can retrievers and cleaners, clothes-pickers, per diem street vendors, handymen (stacking garbage, trimming hedges, cleaning cars, sweeping driveways and pavements, cleaning up at construction sites, etc.), male and female prostitutes, petty criminals and low-level, intermittent drug distributors.

Abuse of Housing. The conversion of dwellings into smaller units and single-resident-occupancy units to house the inner-city population appears to be a readily accessible conduit through which people launder some crack profits, and one which itself generates liquid, illegal dollars. Real estate in the inner city is a field in which the few successful crack distributors and real estate speculators/financiers from the corporate world can cooperate, through racketeering and abuse of the Minorities Business Act, to determine values and future land use. Even when people reinvest crack profits locally, they contribute to neighborhood decline by overcrowding, abusing housing stock, hastening abandonment (Hamid, 1991b).

When individuals exhaust kin and neighborhood ties as pools of potential apartment-sharers, social networks occasioned by crack use offer another pool for "trebling up" and the other uncertainties of poverty. The absence of kinship, neighborhood, or other durable ties in these networks heightens the fragility of makeshift living arrangements and helps to destabilize authority relations within households and in the neighborhood--contexts in which the young are socialized (New York Times, 1989c; Hamid, 1990). When this sort of instability finds a neighborhood home, it "trashes" it, and seeks out other homes to "trash." Crack users then function as a "demolition crew" which completes the destruction of housing stock, and as their crack misuse continues, they ultimately feature prominently in the city's homelessness crisis (Hamid, 1990).

Single Item Consumption. Crack-seeking behavior accelerates the frequency with which a consumer engages in spending episodes. Low-income New Yorkers, like many poor persons around the world (Douglas and Isherwood, 1981), exhibit this pattern that reduces already small consumption ranges to the consumption of one good. Unique as a work force, or as income-generators, crack users and distributors are equally remarkable as spenders, and crack addicts become visible at a street corner first as "pathological consumers" (on a "mission," or ceaselessly generating income for continuous spending on crack). Crack has "commoditized" drugs, which formerly had important folk values in neighborhoods (providing successful and long-term entrepreneurship, jobs, opportunities for local re-investment, and utilization of indigenous skills, labor and value. See Hamid, 1990), and acts as an instrument of capital depletion, extracting overlooked wealth from already impoverished communities and removing it rapidly for reinvestment (often in corporate sector enterprise) far away (Hamid, 1990).

Availability of Formerly Restricted Activity. As crack has become more the perfect commodity, irresistible to the buyer and prompting continuous spending, it has helped to bring other, formerly restricted goods and activities into more general and rapid circulation. Thus, prostitution, violence, and other crime, which are instrumental in the maintenance of crack distributing, seeking, and using institutions (Hamid, 1990; Johnson et al., 1990) have increased. High levels of crime and violence increase the isolation and devaluation of inner-city neighborhoods, while the types of sexual services crack users exchange depersonalize them and exacerbate already strained gender relations (Hamid, 1991b).

Decrease of Civic Sense Among Law-Abiding Neighbors. Flagrant prostitution, gunfire and frequent crime diminish the civic sense of law-abiding citizens in affected communities (Johnson et al., 1990). They become fearful, lose

pride in their neighborhood, and avoid intervening (for example, separating fighting children) in neighborhood events. Two common responses, vigilantism and fear, mix more uncertainty into inner-city life (Hamid, 1991b).

Cynicism in the General Population. Finally, crack's most signal accomplishment has been to breed cynicism in the general population towards the crises which have encouraged its widespread use in the inner-city. The ubiquity of crack has caused many Americans to settle upon it as the simple and magical explanation for what ails cities and to ignore the role of political and economic developments in the creation of urban problems. This outlook has completed the isolation of severely distressed neighborhoods. Recriminatory attitudes have endorsed the law enforcement approach to the drug problem, or the "War On Drugs," as the prerequisite for urban renewal. In New York's low income minority neighborhoods, the Tactical Narcotics Team (TNT), a species of intensive policing which is being criticized severely for the further destabilization of neighborhoods (Frankel and Freeland, 1990; Gunst, 1989; Hamid, 1990d; Gordon, 1990; Los Angeles Times, 1990) exemplifies this approach. It pitted minority youths against the police in battles marked by many casualties, as well as a few deaths.

Lives of School-Age Children

As I have indicated, the enormity of crack, prominent among the forces shaping the milieu in which children are socialized, touches everyone's life. While doing ethnographic fieldwork in Central Harlem, I have had innumerable opportunities to interact with school-age children, dropouts of various ages, graduates and young adults. Below, I present some transcripts of interviews I conducted specifically for this chapter; then I isolate some persistent themes which bear significantly upon the socialization of the young, schools, and the educational

process. These themes include: high levels of frustration, parental abandonment of children, the premature assumption by children of adult roles, lack of discipline in the home and school, peer pressure, estrangement from school, and estrangement from the community.

CHRISTINE

We can take the measure of neighborhood deterioration in Central Harlem on the block where Christine lives. Out of 23 buildings on its southern perimeter, one apartment building with about 25 housing units is completely abandoned. Tenants (mainly crack or substance misusers) lingered on for about two years after the landlord disappeared, surviving lack of water and heat, the gutting and "scrapping" of vacant units, and finally the collapse of the staircase, before a fire persuaded the city to seal the building. Of the tenants, at least one mother (an alcoholic) and her two in- school daughters (18 and 11) stuck it out to the end. Four other buildings--brownstones--have been vacant for so long that only "gut-rehabs" (complete rehabilitation) can return them to use.

At the other end of the spectrum are six brownstones which are owner-occupied. In these, there are five children of school age under the age of 14, who are protected from apparent risk of poverty and its attendant harms. A brother and sister live with their parents, both immigrants from the Caribbean who hold middle-income jobs. They sublet apartments to two teachers. Another brother and sister live in the grandmother's brownstone with their mother and father. All have held jobs, and the grandmother, now retired, is active in her church. The remaining child of school age, a 14-year-old girl, lives with her grandmother, mother, uncle, and two females who are regarded as kin, although they are actually elderly, non-related members of the grandmother's church. In the three remaining

brownstones, there are five college students, two of them foreigners.

In this block, apart from those who fled the abandoned apartment building, there are five children under the age of 10 whose fortunes are not as promising. Indeed, four are under five, and the remaining girl (Christine) will be nine in 1991. All five live in one of two converted brownstones which the city's Housing Preservation and Development Department (HPD) manages, or in a converted brownstone owned by the pastor of a Baptist church nearby. All three buildings are in serious disrepair and are overcrowded. Heavy crack use and alcohol misuse are very much in evidence among the adult tenants, who are either elderly or young unemployed adults. Christine, the nine year old girl, and a one year old boy live with both mother and father: the other three children live with their single mother, who is supported in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program.

Children who are at some remove from poverty are, therefore, evenly matched in number by children who are having a hard time, both in and out of schools. These "good ones" need only to "slip" to share their fate.

The worst brownstone, in which Christine lives, belongs to the pastor. Claiming that he was responding to the homeless crisis, he had converted the brownstone (built originally for a single family) into 12 rental units, three units (with shared bath and toilet) per floor. At the present time, 22 persons are crowded into the building. Small wonder that the walls are crumbling, the baths and toilets are often not functioning, and the poorly lit staircase had cracks and uneven places which can permanently damage an ankle. Unlike the HPD buildings, which do get infrequent repairs, the pastor's overwhelming initial charity towards the homeless exhausted him and prevents him from providing more. He makes sure, however, to collect $325-$375 monthly per rental unit.

I visited Christine's family at Christmas time. Their home is essentially the

front room of the first floor of the brownstone (which housed "the library" in some Harlem townhouses I have visited), and it is furnished with a double bed, a cot, a chest of drawers, a black and white, 19-inch television set, and a small table with three chairs. A closet has been converted into a kitchenette which holds a small refrigerator and a portable, two-burner range. A short, spare, white, artificial Christmas tree with a few red ball decorations stood beside the television. About twelve children's magazines, some newspapers, and an abridged edition of The Last of The Mohicans were stacked near it. Angela (the mother) and Christine were watching television when I came in. Wes (the father) had been asleep on the double bed but then got up to join the conversation. Although Christine lives in these dismal conditions, she is lucky to be raised by both natural parents. Angela, 25 years of age, dropped out of Hunter College due to drug use after two years of nursing studies. Today, she is struggling "to get back on her feet" and is attending school once again. Wes, 35 years old, works part-time as a construction worker and as a handyman. He has had one year of college in the South, in a business administration program. Well-spoken, proud of the smattering of medicine and law he has learned (mainly from television) and of his experiences as a businessman (see below), he, however, drinks, is often listless, and has painful gums or teeth. He talks about education and Christine's future:

Traditional educational practice and corporal punishment:

> My father raised us in a small town in South Carolina where everybody knew everybody else, so that if you did something wrong at school, or anywhere for that matter, your folks at home knew about it long before you got there, and they would be prepared. This was before it became a crime to paddle your children. My dad was a mechanic, so he wasn't expected to leave work to come to school- the sheriff would drive me over to

see him at work with the complaint from the school. My dad would let us come home, tell us to eat, joke with us. He would wait until we were in our drawers in bed, trying to get sleep like he said, before he took up the school matter. He was a very short-tempered man, my dad, and he had only a 3rd grade education, so he wanted me and my brother and sister to make it. Once he broke my arm and leg on the same day. My brother got hit with a lead pipe that damn near fractured his skull. My mother too. She liked to pick up whatever was at hand: if she was in a store standing next to axes, that's what she would go at us with.

It worked for us. My brother owns his own construction company and has a contract with Hardee's Restaurants: he goes all over the country just building their restaurants. He graduated from college. My sister joined the Air Force, then worked with the FBI for a couple of years and is now an inspector in the Postal Service. She and her husband, who is a supervisor at Dupont, just bought a 100-acre farm in Alabama and they are raising cattle, horses and stuff like that. I also graduated, and did a year at college in business administration. I used to own my own club in Atlanta, I had an extermination business, and I also had a limousine service. But this was before I got married, and the woman who was managing my club dealt all kinds of drugs out of it. On the club's accounts, there was a sum of $360,000 which couldn't be accounted for. So the IRS came after her, then after me, and I was fined $640,000 and given a 3-year jail term. Instead of jail, I went on a leniency program, spending weekends only in lock-up, but I can't get credit for another 14 years.

Childrearing in a drug-infested neighborhood:

Now we live in this kind of housing that's not fit for human

consumption. I have sued the landlord for $1 million. The landlord is the pastor at the church next door. This Christmas, my sister and her husband wanted to come up from Alabama, but we were ashamed to invite them.

Christine is the reason we keep paying the rent, paying the light bill, buying the food. Otherwise, we could have just as easily gone to live in a shelter. What I want for her is that she be the best. If she is going to be a handyman or construction worker like me, then let her be the best handyman there is. Let her go into a place and say "this is what needs to be done, this is the way to do it, and these are the materials for the job." And be able to write that down. I don't want her to be a prostitute, I don't want her to sell drugs, I don't want her just to follow the money.

But I know that a child will become depressed by these surroundings. And in a drug-infested neighborhood, you are scared, because your children always have that attraction of the fast money. These children live in a concrete jungle. And you can never take that jungle out of them. They think: "I know what time it is." You take them out of here, you take them down South, and they think: "I can sell this, I can make this kind of money doing that." It's what taught them by the dealers. That and having the gold and the flashy clothes and the cars. And the very worst thing is a street child with some education: they know what time it is.

So we really want to move. Go back down South. We want her to have a yard, or quiet, residential streets. Then we can buy her a bicycle without being scared some crackhead will hurt her to get it.

Educational ambitions:

Meantime, we do our best to encourage Christine to keep on in school and to graduate. I would really like her to go to a better school than P.S. 92,

I would like her to go to one of the top-name schools in the city, but where would I be able to find $9000 a year for fees? She likes to read, and the happiest day of her life was when she got a library card, with her own name written on it. We buy her a few books too.

Relations with the school:

The school sends out a newsletter, and has PTA meetings and conferences with the teacher, but apart from meeting the teacher, we haven't really gotten involved. I think I would get more involved if I had one-to-one contact with the head, the teachers, and other school officials. I really want to know about my child, I want to know about the work she is expected to do, I want to get instruction in it myself, so that I can help her. I am really bothered about the fights and stealing money, or taking coats off children's back. I want to have firsthand information about all of that. I want the teachers to be there to know all about that so that they can make me feel I was there and know all about it. It makes me suspicious that you have to have so many appointments to see the teacher or the head, and that you always have to see deputies or clerks, to explain why you want to see them. I would get more involved if I could move in and out of the school more freely.

The key to excellent teaching:

I think a big problem with the schools is the teachers. I remember my teacher in North Carolina. Mrs Askew. She was mean. She would put a cane to our hands and they be smoking. But whoever went through her class knew math, and social science, and geography. And especially math. She wouldn't let you out of the class after school until you learned your math. She would beat you until you learned. And the parents took her side--she

probably taught them and damn near the whole town. To do something well, you have to love what you do. It's how you become a good construction worker or plumber, and it's how you become a good teacher.

Today's "alien" teachers:

Nowadays, the teachers are fearful. They are not trained to be affected by the terrible living conditions the children live in. And I understand how they feel. They feel they are lucky if they get home safely after work, and they are in a hurry to leave at 3 p.m. Throughout the day, they dealt with shootouts, robberies, fights. Didn't you see the newspaper today? A four-year-old had taken his brother's .22 calibre automatic gun from the car into his daycare center. It was fully loaded. They have overcrowded classrooms they can't control. Imagine it! They have these children for eight hours in the day. I can't take Christine that long. I'd say: "run outside and play" or something. And then we are getting what we paid for: we don't pay them enough. So they are running out. Just like we want to leave, they want to leave too. And at the end of the school day, if a child hasn't understood something, they have no time for questions: "go ask your parents." Then we get mad at the child at home because we don't know how to help.

The strategy of discrimination:

I think the teachers have a strategy in the schools. They just try to calm the children down so that they don't go all crazy. Usually there are five or six in the class who are a real disturbance, or whose parents might come after the teachers, and since the classes are overcrowded, they just turn all their attention on these few, to keep them out of trouble. Everybody winds up doing very little. I was doing the plumbing at Martin Luther High School

and do you know that each day, a different student brings in a rented video to show the class? That means two hours out of eight are spent just watching videos, everyday.

There's a system to all this, that we live in a dump like this. How can we change it, when we have had it for so long?

The embarrassment of poverty:

There's nothing in the neighborhood. If we wanted to expose Christine to anything, we'd have to go outside, and that costs money. The schools take the children on outings to museums, but then you have to pay transportation or send sandwiches. Sometimes we couldn't afford the expense, and Christine couldn't go.

Christine herself talked in a lack-lustre way about her school. She attends regularly if she is not ill, but she gestures to indicate that she is ill quite often. She likes mathematics, but mainly likes to be in her clique of three school friends, who meet regularly at her home when school is out, to play on the stoop or sidewalk. I visited the home the following day at 11 a.m. and found her with one of them on her cot, watching television. Her father was writhing in pain on his bed across the room. His tooth had abscessed during the night, and he had no money to see a doctor or to fill a prescription. On the street, Angela was expecting a neighbor to arrive with a bottle of codeine tablets. She hoped that, if Wes' pain abated, they could all get some sleep.

Today in their late teens, one million girls nationwide, who were like Christine when younger, are mothers of up to three children and are supported by public transfer payments. Only a few take advantage of the two public high schools in the city which enable pregnant girls of school age or mothers to graduate. One million boys, who may have started off like the one-year-old in Christine's building,

are in jail at age 18; or they have dropped out of school and the work force, and are dealing dope and violence. Before they are 21, many will have died. How are these outcomes actually produced?

SEAMUS

For the point of view of young males on this issue, I asked Seamus, an 18-year-old Harlemite who has been troublesome to his mother for the past several years. A "functional" heavy drinker, she has always maintained a job, providing thereby a modest home for her son and daughter. For the past nine years, the family has lived on a block which is even more heavily crack-affected than Christine's. As it is closer to West Harlem, the neighborhood is mixed, and Hispanics (Dominicans whom Seamus calls "Puerto Ricans") and African-Americans are hostile to one another. Some of the hostility stems from the way crack is distributed: the Dominicans are bulk suppliers, while African Americans cannot rise above the street-level trade. While Seamus' mother "gets behind" her children to attend school regularly, or to be disciplined (cleaning up, doing chores, taking responsibility), she does not have the training and skills to make academic subjects interesting, or to ignite and sustain a love for effort and learning. Despite her best efforts as a nag, therefore, Seamus is currently facing an assault and battery charge, the latest in a career of wrongdoing:

Friends and violent crime:

> I'm 18 years old and am about to graduate from the Washington Irving High School. I've been doing much better at my school work and in attendance for the past year because I'm getting ready to graduate and also because I'm afraid of going to jail. Fourteen months ago, 15 of us from the neighborhood were stopped by police when we were coming back from the

hospital, after seeing another friend, Darius, who had been shot by one of the Puerto Rican crack dealers. The police said that three of us had dragged a man into a building, beaten him with our guns, and stole his gold chain. They arrested me and another guy, and a chain was found in the patrol car they took us to the station in. But I recently got a good lawyer and I think we can beat the case. So I'm staying out of trouble.

Trouble and violence at school:

Otherwise, there isn't much to school. Maybe if my mother had been coming in every month to find out how I am doing, from an early age I'm saying, then maybe we might stay in school and graduate and take an interest in studies. Because all the guys I hang with of my age know that the things we do when we hang out--stealing, gambling, wearing expensive clothes, selling drugs, using them--have no future. But some of them are 26 or 27, and they'll soon be 30, and then it's all over really. It makes us mad sometimes. But nothing happens in the school. Our teachers are mostly white: I have two black and one Hispanic teacher. They are scared, and don't know how to handle the fights. They can't tell us nothing because they are not our mothers. Maybe if they knew how to hang out, or what it takes, they wouldn't be so uptight. Right now, all kids who are out of class at 10 a.m. are on suspension until whoever did it owns up that they put out the lights in an elevator and beat up the gym teacher, who is still in hospital.

The solace of neighborhood and gang:

Since we moved to this neighborhood, I have grown up with a group of about 15 kids who also live around here. Some of them used to come to my school to meet me, or I would go to theirs. But the neighborhood was our meeting place. We still hang out at the same places we used to when we

were kids, like at xx Street and XX Avenue, where we'll be tonight. We hang out there every night, or especially on weekends, from about 8 p.m, to 2 a.m., though nowadays I'm spending more time with my girlfriend, to keep out of trouble. Nowadays, there are just about 12 of us--two of us are in prison facing 6-to-life, for attempted murder and selling drugs, while another one is in Buffalo, selling drugs there. Darius and myself are the youngest, since Darius is only 17, but the oldest among us is 27 or 28. And we've split up into two groups, the King Alphas and the Evildoers. My group, the King Alphas--I got the name from a computer program at school, and the others liked it--is different from the Evildoers because we dress better and have more girls. Otherwise, we hang together, we don't fight, and we are from the same neighborhood. We aren't really a gang, we don't have passwords or secret signals or special things to do. We just hang together and stick up for one another.

I wouldn't like to leave the neighborhood and my friends. Here, I know every basement, every exit, how to get away over rooftops or from anywhere, and I know everybody and everything that's happening. My girlfriend lives right here. Sometimes we go out to the Jackson Hole restaurants downtown for hamburgers, but mostly we go out right around here. In January, we are going to live in Jamaica, Queens and I'm dreading it. I'll probably still hang out here. I wouldn't want to go and live abroad, for example.

A gang "hangs out":

When we are hanging out, how we dress is very important. Tonight I'll wear: my 8-ball jacket, costing $250; pants worth $30 --like Levis; a shirt for $40; $80 Timberland boots; and my gold jewellery--the ring and

bracelet--cost $800. I'll wear one of those brim hats you see old men wearing. So I'll have about $1200 on my body, or $12,000 between us. I don't drink or smoke or do drugs: but the rest of the fellas will snort up about 3 x $30 bags of "nitro" [intranasal cocaine] or $90's worth. They'll drink a lot of beer, mostly Heineken or Budweiser--say about 10 x $1 bottles, or about $100 in all. And maybe they'll smoke about 5 "nickel bags" ($5) of reefer, or $25. That's in one night of hanging out, like tonight. We don't spend much on food, and maybe we'll rap to the girls who hang there and buy them beer.

So it's to buy clothes, jewellery and sneakers that we try to make money mainly. I spent about $1800 on myself alone at Christmas time. I bought my girlfriend a shearling coat for $140 and a ring for $79. Shearling coats are the rage this year, and they are robbing them off people's backs. I had just got a settlement since turning 18 for an accident I had when I was 14, so I had that cash just before Christmas. That's how my mother paid down on the house in Queens.

Selling crack:

Three of us sell crack while we hang out, and I suppose we are a sort of protection, since nobody will mess with them when we are all there. They are selling for another 26-year-old African-American in the neighborhood, who gives them packages of 100 x $2 vials--real tiny bottles!--to sell, and pays them $100 a night, or by commission. I think they are selling less and that there are fewer customers nowadays, and they are bringing VCRs and stuff like that to pay with. In this neighborhood, the Puerto Ricans control the bulk quantity while we sell it at the street level. None of us uses crack. Snorting nitro is not as destructive as smoking cocaine: it just gets you high.

I started selling crack when I was 13, in 1985. I was in Junior High School on XXXst Street and I remember I wanted a pair of sneakers and my mother gave me $20, which wasn't enough. So I told an older guy I knew I would sell the crack, and I got busted that same day. The judge let me off. When I turned 16, I started out again as a lookout for a pal who had just returned from jail, and took over his business when he went back to jail. I'd buy about $400 worth of crack and repackage it. I'd make at least double my money. I'd do it occasionally to buy clothes, or to help out my mother. I'd tell her I got the money from my girlfriend, or from gambling. When we hang out, we gamble a lot. We play a game with dice called "silo." But nowadays, I'm trying to stay out of trouble to graduate.

Other crime:

The other way to make money is to rob people, although some of us do get welfare. We do that when we are really broke. Then we look around for somebody who might have money. A housewife or a worker, or maybe even a crack dealer. Usually we hunt down Puerto Ricans, and their kids loot us. Then we use our guns, because when people see a gun, they give up their money.

Guns:

Between us, we have 6 weapons: a .22 automatic, a .25 automatic, a .38 Special revolver, a Tech-9 and a 30/30 shotgun. I have the .25 and I keep it mostly at home. I take it out with me, to school or when we are hanging out, when I am expecting trouble. I will use it, to defend myself.

Anticipating a short life:

I was planning on joining the army, but now the country is going to war (December, 1990), so I don't want to do that anymore. Maybe I'll go

back to school to study nursing. I'd like to get a job in construction. I was good at taking and developing pictures too. I learned photography while I was at the High School of Graphic Arts, at 50th Street. I hope I can live long, if I don't run into any problems.

KATHY

Will Christine become Kathy ten years from today? At 26 years of age, Kathy has been a crack misuser for the past four years. Her life as a crack misuser has featured homelessness, multiple involvements with the criminal justice system and other state agencies, and continuous, heavy exploitation as a sex worker. Although she is homeless, she has avoided the shelters by finding makeshift housing arrangements in Christine's neighborhood:

Childrearing by default:

My name is Kathy, I am 26 years old, and I have always lived in this Harlem neighborhood. I have two daughters. Naisha is six years old and she stays with my grandmother. I can visit her anytime I like, but I stay away because I cause my grandmother distress. Natasha is two and lives with my aunt in the Bronx. My aunt thinks that because I am a crackhead--I don't really call myself that, I'm really a "crack-enjoyer." I am a thief, so I never visit her home, and I see Natasha only in the street, when they visit over here. When Naisha was born, I wasn't smoking crack, just snorting cocaine, smoking reefer and drinking beer. But they took Natasha away because she was born with crack.

The woman I call "grandmother" is really an old woman, a beautician who used to own a beauty shop, who was very lonely when I was born, and my mother gave me to her. My mother didn't want to look after any of her

children--she had seven sons and me, the daughter--and I have never seen my brothers, who are all in Tennessee. My real grandmother is from Tennessee, like my mother. Ms. Maisie is about 80 years old now and gets an SSI [Social Security Insurance] check. Her apartment in the projects is a three-bedroom, and just Naisha and herself live there. It's really nice, and there's even room for me, if I wanted to go back. Naisha goes to St. Aloysius on XXXnd Street. That's a parochial school, the same one I went to. If I had stayed there, or gone on to a higher parochial school, I'm sure things would have turned out differently for me.

Abandonment by mother:

I really don't like to talk about my mother, because it hurts me so much that she abandoned me. She's alive, she's about 51, she lives right near here, she has a good job and makes good money, and she doesn't want to have anything to do with me. I went straight from the hospital where I was born to Ms. Maisie's. She would visit as I was growing up, but it seems as if she only came when I was bad with Ms. Maisie, so then she would punish me [She weeps]. It really hurts me so much that she rejected me. Because I was the only girl, and she was a woman too. She knew what it was like outside there for a woman, because she had been out there herself. But still I had to learn everything for myself. She never wanted to know me or me to know her. Once I took Natasha in her stroller to see her. She was outside her building, but when she saw us coming, she went upstairs and locked the door. Another time I asked her for a few dollars, just to see what she would say. You know what she said? "Now you know you shouldn't be asking that.

I don't know why my mother just left me like that at birth, and all

my brothers too. I would never do that to my little girls, not ever let them know who I was. I really can't tell you why she did it. I know she used to party a lot and have a lot of men. They would come over and treat me like they were my father, but I never knew my real father. I couldn't say whether it was because she used drugs. But I needed her. [She weeps again]. Sure, it hurts bad, what do you expect?

Victimization of female crack misusers:

[Sobbing] It's hard out here for a woman. I really like crack, I like the high. But men dog [victimize] you in the crack world. I prefer you gave me money and let me go get high by myself, as I enjoy doing. Let me do what you want me to do and then let me go. But you want me to do all of that--and for what? A bottle [vial of crack]? Give me a break! You can afford to spend $500 in a night on a drug--on nothing!--and you're giving me a bottle! One man, a bus driver, spent over $2000 in a couple of months, and you can't leave me with $20 or $30, you give me a bottle! And when you come [reach sexual climax] once, it's all over. You see, women can smoke more than men, because when they come, that's all they want. But all I have to do is to lie there, and I can go on smoking. Some of them, especially those who smoke, like you to suck their dick while they are taking a hit, and it takes a long time for them to come. Some of them like to go down [perform cunnilingus] on the woman.

The freak house or sex-for-crack exchanges:

I have been living in this old guy's freak house for the last two years. It's just an apartment where a few people go to get high, but nobody sells drugs there. It's not a base house [a locale set up specifically for sale and use of crack]. Two other girls live there permanently too, but others come

and go. But he's so thirsty [greedy for crack], I'd bring in an all-nighter--you know, a respectable person with a job who does it once in a blue, or when they have the money--and you know he's going to spend $400 or $500. So the man gives him $20 for the room, but when he's finished with that, he comes spoiling things for me. "How long you going to be in the room? and all this! And he keeps bugging you for more money or crack! And now today, he just got a fat SSI [Social Security Insurance] check and he's getting high, but do you think he's going to remember me and all the times I looked out for him?

The importance of family in rehabilitation:

I'd like to get out, but someone would have to come and take me away altogether. I think about it, but I can't take the first steps myself to do it. You see, it all boils down to family again. I need somebody to help me, and that's why it hurts about my mother so much. [She weeps again]. I don't have any family. I need my mother but I'd never show that, because she already turned her back on me. You see, I am not guilty. I don't owe her anything, but she owes me. I went into a treatment place near here, and they tell you that you can be this and you can be that and that's all fine. But what about tonight? When you go back there, you're back in the groove and they make you want to get high. That old guy pressures you.

The rewards of parochial school and education:

But let's talk about something cheerful instead. It's such a beautiful day, it feels good to be alive [it was a sunny day in March, and about 60 degrees]. I loved my time at St. Alphonse [a parochial, Catholic school in the neighborhood]. My first teacher was Sister Angela. The nuns were very strict, they kept you in line, they were always down on you [monitored

behavior and school performance closely], but I loved it. I graduated in 1979, and if my grandmother had kept me on in parochial school, I would have come under the same discipline and my life would have been very different. But instead I went to public school when I was 14--to Martin Luther King Jr High School.

Failure of the public school:

And you know how that is. At public school. They didn't care, nobody was strict. So that's where I learned about cutting classes, and smoking reefer, and hanging out. I used to wear fly [fashionable or sexy] clothes and stuff. I used to be good at English and Music. Singing. But I saw the others cutting classes and it looked as though they were having fun, so that's what I did too. Then when I was 17, I got involved with my babies' father. He is the same age as me, but he's in jail now. He was on crack too and did a robbery. This is the second time he's been to jail. I suppose I was more into him than he was into me, and deep down I think he's still the only one I love. But he really didn't care for anyone but himself. He was a hustler.

When I graduated in 1982--I just scraped by really--I got a job at Legal Aid, and that's what really got me into cocaine. Because of all that money I made. I could go to the coke man and pay for what I wanted and not have to ask anybody for it. I could even get credit from him because he knew I had a job to pay back for it. I used to go to after-hours clubs to buy it. And I fucked up real bad with it, as you know. I fucked up real bad, you know, and I can't blame anyone.

Some Major Themes in the Stories of Christine, Seamus, and Kathy

Several recurrent themes in these stories bear directly upon the relation between the neighborhood environment, family, and engagement in the educational process. They include:

A High Level of Frustration. In Wes's case, the frustration of a thwarted businessman extends to the state of the home, his upbringing of Christine, his relationship with her school, his regard of the neighborhood, and his outlook on the future. Hampered by legal restrictions, he is unable to bring to these areas of his life the energies of a striving or successful businessman. His wife Angela also has a drug-misusing past to regret.

Seamus' neighborhood friends "sometimes get mad" as they reflect on their "wasted" lives and anticipate an early death.

Kathy has not recovered from the trauma of abandonment by her mother which she experienced as a baby. Currently, she is unable to find an appropriate treatment modality for her crack use or better solutions to her homelessness.

Many other respondents in Central Harlem are frustrated by grinding poverty and by a feeling of powerlessness. The offering of $20 for a pair of sneakers prompted Seamus to become a drug distributor, while his handling of a toothache reveals how the lack of funds or adequate insurance obliges Wes to postpone attending to other health problems.

Parental Abandonment of Children. Parental abandonment ranges from Kathy's mother's outright rejection of Kathy at birth, to Christine's parents being so self-absorbed (by the million intrusions of poverty, including the toothache which could not be relieved for lack of money), that Christine's needs are not identified and consequently neglected. While Kathy denounces her mother for abandoning her, she has little significant contact with her two little girls, the older of whom lives with the same elderly, childless woman with whom Kathy had been lodged 26 years ago.

to be left alone. Kathy's mother appears to have been abusive in her infrequent interactions with her.

Perpetuation of Patterns to Which People Are Socialized (e.g., children assuming adult roles). A corollary of parental abandonment is the assumption, in varying degrees, by children of adult, care-taking roles. With her father in agony and her mother on the street begging charity painkillers, Christine and her classmate learn from the television set, and they often have to find meals for themselves. In the case of other children in Central Harlem, this might mean spending all day near the corner store soliciting loose change. Since early childhood, Seamus and his sister have fared for themselves to accommodate both their mother's work hours and her drinking.

Lack of Discipline at Home and School Youths fending for themselves in the absence of parental care are undisciplined in ways that give them bad reputations at school. In particular, their settlement of disputes by "fights" disconcerts teachers, makes them fearful for their own safety, and diminishes their stature as authority figures.

Both Kathy and Wes spoke of the positive value of unvarying expectations concerning children's deportment and educational performance, rigorously backed up with physical punishment from teachers and parents in the South Carolina setting, or by nuns in the parochial school.

Peer Pressure. By the time Christine, or a male counterpart, reaches 13, she has learned to inhabit a neighborhood which is different from the kind of neighborhood her parents lived in. Seamus describes his neighborhood as the maze of escape routes and secret meeting places that cuts across rooftops and through the basements of buildings. In this world, a subculture of unique status concerns, obligations, and rewards takes root (Williams 1987; Anderson 1990): the subculture

is sharply differentiated by gender.

Seamus describes what it means to be male: His outlook is similar to that of the younger sons of Catholic nobility in Medieval Europe. While semi-automatic weapons replace the rapier, and ethnic rivalry or competition in the drug trade replace court rivalry, the youths have the same fondness for finery (the shearling coats, "8-ball" jackets, and jewellery) and keen sensitivity to insult, or to being "dis-"ed (shown disrespect). Dominance over females is also an abiding concern. Cut off from means of legitimate employment, Seamus and his friends depend on armed robbery--again like the "young bloods" of medieval European courts--and drug distribution to support their "conspicuous consumption." These options will involve them heavily with the criminal justice system, and before 20, most will have lengthy "rap sheets" (records of arrests and convictions). Reliance on guns and the preoccupation with "trouble" encourage a conviction that life will be short. At any rate, by age 30 a male is a nonentity, and no longer a significant player in the important status games: "it is all over," except for bitterness.

Kathy describes what it means to be female. Kathy moved from the strict discipline of nuns at the parochial school to involvement with the peer group at the public high school. This involvement meant cutting classes (even the ones she enjoyed) and affecting "fly" clothes for outings which had as their purpose attracting the attention of males.

Kathy's account of her love affair with a young crack distributor/user is typical of many girls in Central Harlem. Her investment in the relationship, in terms of the need for love and nurturing, is greater than his, and, in fact, is largely unrequited. No doubt playing key roles in this drama of love and its denial, two infants are born.

Although Kathy speaks of her graduating as atypical, her subsequent career of

Although Kathy speaks of her graduating as atypical, her subsequent career of job loss, drug misuse, and exploitation is the common lot of many age-mates.

Estrangement From School. It is clear that respondents do not have positive attitudes toward school. Wes complains that they are separate from the community, and staffed by "alien" teachers and officials, who are usually inaccessible. Seamus thinks the school should have encouraged his mother to visit his school from an early age to monitor his progress.

All my respondents agree that teachers are afraid of their students and the neighborhoods in which the schools are located. They believe that the school discharges a mainly custodial function, or that teachers are simply bad. Seamus' account of the assault on a gym teacher, who "is still in hospital," indicates that teachers' fears are not groundless.

Estrangement From Community. Estranged from the schools, parents are also estranged from their neighborhoods, in which many are recent arrivals. Neighborhoods lack educational, cultural or recreational facilities, and, as Wes points out, exposure to crime, drug trafficking and use and to many other "incivilities" has a depressing effect.

At the same time, Seamus and his friends have created a "new" neighborhood from the old. They regard its population and its resources as self-sufficient emotional, intellectual, and social supports. Seamus never willingly ventures away from it.

Some Mitigating Features. Despite the above problems, the belief in education as a positive value in itself and as a means of upward mobility is evident in the study participants' discourse. Seamus recognizes that the pursuits he shares with his friends are trivial. Anxious to avoid grand larceny, assault, and weapons-possession charges, and spurred on by his attorney, he has remained in school and

to be alive." She graduated, although she confessed that she had lost interest even in the academic subjects which she liked. Wes values excellence and wants Christine to excel at something. His wife, Angela, wants to complete college.

Supporting the resources of individuals are some neighborhood strengths, such as human networking. Although transiency among neighborhood residents is very pronounced, Kathy's mother found an old woman who "adopted" Kathy as an infant and is raising Kathy's daughter today. A neighbor supplies Wes with codeine tablets, while the loyalty and goodwill which Seamus and his friends have for one another are easily discerned.

Magnitude of the Problems

More than one in five children in New York City live in ravaged neighborhoods and in households whose income is below poverty level. Their mortality rate at birth compares unfavorably with those of Third World countries. More than percent of them have been dropping out of school by age 15 for the past several years.

Crack misuse has allegedly compounded these problems. Children born in 1985 and 1986 are entering school in 1991, and among them is an undetermined number which has been prenatally exposed to crack. In a recent report, a kindergarten teacher have commented that although "I can't say for sure that it's crack, in all my [20] years of teaching, I've never seen so many functioning at such low levels." Children are unable to concentrate, to attempt writing, to count, to sit still, to hold scissors or jumbo crayons, to walk normally, to enunciate words clearly, to refrain from fighting, from screaming, or from "racing wildly up and down the hall" (Daley, 1991). In New York City, there has already been a sharp increase of five-year-olds who have been referred for special-education evaluations:

by February 1991, 1600 have been evaluated, as compared to 1,071 in all of 1990. Estimates of the nationwide number of affected children begin at 100,000.

The worrisome behaviors of incoming kindergartners are rather signs of remission when viewed in light of the prognoses which had been made for them at birth. A researcher at the National Institute on Drug Abuse has summed up their disabilities by explaining that prenatal exposure to crack "interferes with the central core of what it is to be human" (New York Times, 1990a). The monstrosities, such as physical deformities and developmental disabilities, that crack generates are magnified by its effects upon caretakers in the home, where apparently "The Instincts of Parenthood Become Part of Crack's Toll" (New York Times, 1990b). The school and its staff, lacking detailed understanding of the grim circumstances of an undisclosed number of its charges and without appropriate pedagogical strategies, run at a disadvantage.

Policy Recommendations

A number of concerns were identified in this chapter which a fuller use of the school and its resources might address. They included: the personal frustrations of low-income parents and children, parental abandonment, schoolchildren's assumption of adult roles, lack of discipline, peer pressure, and the estrangement of schoolchildren and their parents from the school and community.

Fuller Utilization of School Facilities. In Central Harlem neighborhoods, the school often stands out amid abandoned houses, empty lots, and the rundown brownstones or apartment buildings where people live. While many are in need of better maintenance or various repairs, and although libraries and other facilities could be restored or strengthened, schools are nevertheless intact structures in comparison to neighboring ones. They stand in fenced-in grounds, provide an array of functional

spaces and equipment, and are usually well-lit and comfortably heated or cooled.

Especially during the summer vacation, when the local population can ill afford alternative instruction or amusement for itself and its schoolchildren, the recessed school goes against reason. Programs offering the school and its facilities to the community on a daily, year-round basis could absorb energies which the street now claims.

Sponsorship of Adult Education. If schools are made available at night, on weekends, and during vacations, programs for adult education could be implemented. Wes and Angela (Christine's parents) would be the first among many to enroll. Recently, Wes has been earning $100 a day as a demolition worker, and the change in fortune has buoyantly affected his demeanor, the look on his face, and his conversation. He wants me to establish a corporation to make bids to the city for demolition contracts and administer them, while he hires men and does the actual work. "I need you to be my writer," he has pleaded. What Wes actually needs are relevant courses for small businessmen.

A multicultural curriculum in adult education programs might stimulate enrollment substantially. In Summer 1991, a large and diverse group of Harlemites has been attending the Summer Institute of the Black Studies Department, City College, City University of New York. They meet twice weekly for sessions which regularly last for four or five hours, to discuss implementation of a multicultural curriculum in the schools.

Parenting classes (including instruction on nutrition, health care, and household budgeting) also generate enormous interest, especially among teenage or young adult parents and parents recovering from substance abuse. Community agencies and hospitals which currently offer them can accommodate only a few of the local applicants. Wes's proposals for increasing his participation in Christine's

schooling amount to a "Suzuki Method" (parent-child partnership) of education for the two of them.

Sponsorship of Neighborhood Associations. Increased availability of schools could also foster or strengthen neighborhood sentiments of local solidarity and upliftment. Schools could provide forums to discuss issues of local importance and opportunities for organizing around them. Tenants' rights, home improvement, neighborhood amenities, drugs, and crime are some areas in which Harlemites need education and guidance in order to become effective, empowered actors.

Some senior citizens who participated in my research are highly qualified persons, including the nation's first African-American social worker with an advanced degree in social work from Columbia University. Efforts to engage the skills of these energetic persons in community-directed work may be well rewarded.

If the example of Alcoholics Anonymous meetings in Central Harlem is a guide, recovering "addicts" can never have too many meeting places! Drug misusers in the Netherlands and Switzerland have been enabled (in a climate of decriminalization, or de facto legalization of drugs) to form self-help groups, or junkiebonden, in the context of which they have reduced the potential harm of drugs, and learned to undertake the responsibilities of work, parenthood, family, and community (Grund, 1991a, 1991b). Elsewhere in New York City, my colleagues have used research facilities to enable crack- misusing prostitutes to form groups where they discuss precautions against such job-related problems as violence, or sexual practices which put them at high risk of disease, including AIDS (Curtis, 1991).

Innovative Offices. Relationships between the school, parents, the community and students may be improved by novel additions to the school and its staff. For example, vigorous outreach is required to engage those segments of the parent

population which routinely avoid contact with public agencies, such as active substance misusers, criminals, ex-convicts, and some disabled persons. At one school in Central Harlem, the Office of the Mayor funded an Island of Safety Program. A social worker on subcontract from a community agency borrowed space in an art room several days a week to counsel students who had been referred from the classrooms for a suspiciously unkempt appearance, fatigue, or other signs of psychosocial distress. Although several parents were contacted in their homes and encouraged to take advantage of various support services, the program has been discontinued because of lack of funds.

A school office and staff that advocate aggressively for services, or make effective referrals, are also needed. Some staff could be allocated to facilitate parent-teacher contact.

Outreach to the business community and other institutions for support is necessary. In Philadelphia, partnerships between universities and high schools have improved retention rates and raised test scores in the latter (Harkavy and Puckett, 1990). In New York City, philanthropist, Eugene Lang, adopted a class in an East Harlem public school several years ago through his innovative mentor program; he is now shepherding the majority of them successfully into college or employment (Berger, 1989).

Relevant Teacher Training. A commonly heard complaint about teachers is that their lack of familiarity with living conditions in inner-city neighborhoods leaves them unable to function satisfactorily as instructors, disciplinarians or role models. More knowledge and empathy about the hardships the local population faces, sensitivity to the many types of personal frustration which students and their parents experience, and understanding of racial or other discrimination which adversely affect individual lives should be some of the goals of teacher training. Developing

pedagogical procedures which are better suited to improving performance in this specific population is another.

Decentralization. Schools ought to have a degree of local autonomy (in areas of staffing, budgeting, and decision-making) which enables them to identify the unique needs of their catchment areas, and to plan and implement appropriate responses to them.

Research. More research is required to make the best of combined efforts and to design effective interventions for specific groups of children of school age or citizens.

Conclusion: The School in Neighborhood Renewal

The focus on improving schools and their relationships to neighborhoods ought not to draw attention away from what is mostly needed, or the political will to make sweeping, comprehensive, infrastructural repairs of the physical neighborhoods, and to develop the human capital therein. A "Marshall Plan" for the inner cities, rather than a single, improved facility (planted in a landscape which remains as desolate as before), is required (Kasarda, 1991). It is what Kathy had concluded, when she remarked that drug treatment alone was not sufficient for her rehabilitation.

In a "Marshall Plan," islands of stability and organization in neighborhoods, such as churches, police precincts, hospitals, schools, community agencies, and businesses, should make combined efforts to engage children and their families. The goal would be to recreate the "tutorial village" which must be in place if a single child is to learn.

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